

## ANOTHER NAME FOR THE FURNITURE CARPET BEETLE

By H. S. BARBER\*

Changes in names of insects are unpleasant and often regrettable, but when misuse of a name is due to error of published analysis or record, technical honesty requires correction. Economic ecologists and teachers agree with hobbyists in resenting such correction when the mistake involves some name which they think they have learned. Although most of these objectors will be unable to see why changes are necessary, a few may be able to understand that Linnaeus' devotion to his objective of cataloging the divinely created kinds by their names has been continued with very imperfect results by his followers for two centuries. Linnaeus himself and many of his disciples, as a result of their divergent personal theories, have misapplied his names in their continued attempts to classify and record zoological kinds. If, during his life work, Linnaeus named a tenth of a percent of the kinds we now believe exist and if, after two centuries of continued effort, only 5 percent or even 10 percent of the species of animals have been definitely named, it should be plain that our duty to our successors who will distinguish and name the remaining 90 percent or 95 percent which are still without names, is to correct errors as they are found. The yet unaccomplished part is still so great that corrections in our working records seem far preferable to the perpetuation of errors by *nomina conservanda*. Yet some idealistic organizers who revolutionize the procedures by which students in different countries have sought to coordinate their records seem to believe continued misuse of names is better than correction of errors.

*Anthrenus fasciatus* Herbst, 1797, was recorded as a pest in Georgia by Lutz in 1911 (Journ. New York Ent. Soc., vol. 19, p. 200), the specimens upon which the record was based having been identified by Walther Horn. This name was used until the late Mr. G. J. Arrow at the British Museum concurred in my opinion (in litt., 1926) that the original description and figures

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\*Among the numerous notes and manuscripts left by Mr. Barber was this one upon a subject in which he was interested shortly before his death. It is printed as it was in his hand-written copy, with only minor changes.

of *Anthrenus fasciatus* Herbst (Natarsystem . . . Insekten, vol. 7, p. 337, pl. 115, figs. 11, L) could not be applied to our pest, which, he informed me, was the species named *Anthrenus vorax* by Waterhouse, 1883 (Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist., Ser. 5, Vol. 11, p. 61). This latter name was thereafter used for the "furniture carpet beetle" and adopted by Mutchler and Weiss in 1927 (New Jersey Dept. Agric. Bur. Stat. Insp., Cir. 108, pp. 15, 24).

During 35 years experience with this household pest and its two color forms, subspecies, or close relatives, doubt as to its correct name frequently disturbed me. Especially interesting was the uncertain identity of *Anthrenus flavipes* LeConte, 1854 (Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia, vol. 7, p. 112) described from one specimen found in New York (City?) which had been misassigned as a variety of *scrophulariae* (L.) by Jayne (Proc. American Philos. Soc., 1882, vol 20, p. 370) and apparently never re-examined. The same suspicion came independently to Dr. E. G. Linsley but neither of us wished to advocate adoption of the name *flavipes* without personal study of the type. Opportunity for such study came to me recently (April 1950). I found the well preserved type specimen of *Anthrenus flavipes* LeC. agreed with the form recorded in our economic literature as *fasciatus* Herbst and *vorax* Waterhouse. Of these latter names the former seems to have been a misidentification long used in Europe and the latter had been wrongly suppressed as its synonym. The homonym *Anthrenus vorax* Casey, 1900 (not Waterhouse, 1883), the type of which seems to be a well nourished individual of *Anthrenus verbasci* (L.), has been confusing to those relying on the Catalogue by Leng, 1920 (and its supplements) in which *vorax* Waterhouse is not found.

The correct name for our common furniture carpet beetle, therefore, should be *Anthrenus flavipes* LeC., and *A. vorax* Waterhouse, 1883 (not Casey, 1900) should stand as its synonym.